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THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN GIRLS AND BOYS!¹

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ABSTRACT: This paper refers to a selected fragment, which is about children's gendered behaviours and children's thoughts on gender issue, of an ethnographic study on children's subjectivation processes through digital technologies. For this whole study, philosophy for children approach was used as a technique to conduct focus group interviews with children in a periodical basis. The selected parts for this paper are based on three different sections of those interviews; first one is about children's opinions on gender roles, referring to gendered occupations and plays for kids, the second one is also conducted to reveal the hidden discourses on gender in real society and virtual world which has been built on the existed world, and lastly adult-children hierarchical relations, was debated with children in order to connect this distinction to gender differences, will be mentioned.

KEYWORDS: gender differences, gender roles, asymmetric power relations, adult-children distinction, children's voices

¹ This paper is based on an ethnographic fieldwork study in a private secondary school in Istanbul, Turkey for a Ph.D dissertation in Sociology Department at Mimar Sinan University.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood as a research area has been disregarded in social sciences for an extended period of time, because the period of childhood is temporal and a common experience of all people, which would be left behind. For this reason, recognisability of children is one of the basic topics for childhood studies in order to define a child as a subject, an agent, an individual, and even a human being. While agency of children plays an important role for childhood studies, less is known about how their agencies differ from each other. Ethnographic studies with children are worthwhile to understand children's peer cultures, which will be amplified next chapters. However, it is necessary to underline that increasing importance about childhood studies becomes to focus on different childhood experiences.

For instance, children's peer groups are separated by gender according to Thorne (1993), and she focuses on gender in childhood, and tries to understand why and how two gendered worlds is created by peer relations in such young ages. While Thorne claims children have two peer cultures upon their gender, Harris (1998: 423) mentions how children create plays differently: as boys are interested in hierarchical roles in plays, girls need to find out intimacy in their face to face relations. These are like imitations of real world's gender roles in their daily routines, staying strict to traditional discourses on gender. Moreover, Buckingham (2000: 179) claims their agenda might be different from each other, since "girls were more likely to dwell on the 'human interest' aspects of political issues", while boys' are more enthusiastically address the mechanism on politics, which advocates Corsaro's (2009) claim that children are "co-constructors of society".

Therefore, the primary goal of this paper is to reveal how that group of children in Istanbul construct their social life as individuals of the new generation of Turkish society by focusing on gender differences between. Furthermore, these children's attitudes to authority, and their opinions about existing gender roles in Turkish society are investigated by observing 'peer cultures' of them as a methodological tool. In the one hand 'cultures' term is important to emphasize gender differentiations among the children, in the other hand, the concept of 'authority' which includes both adult authorship and power relations deriving from gender, will be used to analyse boys' and girls' distinctive attitudes and habits against adults and between themselves as well. During next chapter, usual approaches and new paradigms on childhood will be mentioned, and owing to peer cultures, theoretical frame will be related to methodology part, then finally, in the main chapter, "a case study in a private secondary school in Istanbul" I will share my research findings, underlining children's genders whom I worked with.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

Childhood studies is becoming a prevailing trend for social sciences, moreover, children's subjectivation is still an important debate issue in sociology of childhood. According to Prout (2005), in addition to childhood's being a concept which is "socially constructed", their existence on whether they should be accepted as human becom-

ings or human beings has been argued for more than twenty years. This well-known contradiction is derived from human development perspective, whereas the dichotomy also continues to point out power relations between adult “beings” and children. For a child, to be a subject seems as the main problem, while it is directly related to subjection to author [adult] in a Foucauldian perspective. In his famous writing on power and knowledge, Foucault (2000) addresses the relation between subject and subjection; while relating the concept of subject to “self” as a reflexive pronoun, he also underlines (1988) that constitution of subjectivity means governing self.

Children’s subjectivity is a remarkable issue to study on, since new paradigm for both sociology of childhood and childhood studies in general, is children’s being seen worthy to understand. Prout and James (1997) mention that “new paradigm” to reconstruct childhood studies according to several points to be considered, such as social factors children have, their social positions, attending to a research as independent persons. Social position is related to class, ethnicity, and gender which we will focus on. Like any other human beings, children are also affected by the unequal situations in the world, that’s why their positioning in daily life seems important. It can also be developed to another study about inequalities, since childhood is not a monolithic concept. In addition to its history, and changing perspectives for it, childhood(s) are being reshaped by circumstances, changing discourses in our lives. Gender issue is directly related to this basis. Another important factor is children’s independency, which is more about methodology actually, because research “with” children is necessary, instead of research “on” them. Children are also needed to become subjects and individuals, as James (2009) emphasizes, in order to take part in social life and in history as well.

Jenks (2005) addresses that having realist judgment on children is only possible to observe peer relations, which leads us to peer culture concept that Corsaro and Eder (1990) discussed decades ago, underlining children from different ages and genders probably develop different cultures according to their group dynamics; collective ideas might be built up, even bullying can exist among peer groups. To conduct an ethnographic study in order to realize research with children, observation on these kinds of relations seems necessary. In addition to the conception of “children’s peer cultures” developed by Corsaro and Eder (1990) with an impression from any other age groups’ peer cultures, Harris (1998: 399) focuses on children’s cultures by defining it as “a mixed bag” filled with plays, words, and strategies. Corsaro (2005) also defines children’s peer culture as all children’s interactions with each other, their developing routines, artefacts, values, and so on. Mouritse (1997) exemplifies the artefacts of children, by separating their cultures to three distinct segments: there could be cultural products which is made up by adults “for” children, others might create “with” children, and some cultural items can also be produced “by” children for themselves. That separation can also be perceived as the stages of children’s subjectivity, in relation to adult authority. When adults create something “for” them, children are not seen as subjects enough, whereas they can create cultures by their own, that means they become real individuals.

In his work on future of childhood, Prout (2005) underlines democratic participa-

tion perspective as the specific approach of 21. century, children also need to become active participants for their own lives to take place in society, therefore, children's rights can be rebuilt through their own perspectives, adult and children can involve in collaborative and cooperative manners to live together, and researchers can become more innovative and reflexive while studying with children. Mayall (2001) also addresses that adult researchers should learn knowledge of children and develop new techniques to understand their thoughts and point of views. Despite that traditional discourse gives more value to old generations' knowledge and admits authorship of adults, generational order is needed to be reconsidered in this digital era where new generations are natives, while older generations become immigrants of the new world order. Alanen (2009) used "generational order" concept referring to Mannheim at first in order to use generation as "an analytic tool" to analyse distinctions deriving from their age differences, she also emphasizes old generations' authorship as an issue on power, or empowerment. On the other hand, technological developments create another side of power relations we are already used to, for instance, Postman (1982) mentioned the connection between childhood concept and technological devices at first, according to him, the invention of press had separated children's worlds, then the invention of television combined those separated worlds of children and adult to each other again.

In recent decades the internet is our new agenda to define children as "digital natives", that Palfrey and Gasser (2008) especially use the distinction between "natives" and "immigrants" to replace the generational order through power relations. Tapscott (2009) also refers to the relation between knowledge and power to advert the "asymmetric knowledge relations" of different generations, because first time during history children might find themselves in an advantageous position in face of older generations by having more knowledge on technological issues, which may lead them to be aware of adult's agenda more, besides, they already have opinions on existing inequalities in the world, they can develop more awareness on power, discrimination, rights, justice in order to become subjects and active participants for their own lives.

Children's Peer Cultures and Intersubjectivity

According to Crossley (1996), intersubjectivity is important to product knowledge through inter-personal relations, and peer groups' knowledge production is directly related to that perspective, just like Hardel (1988: 176), as a researcher for especially methodology for studies with children, addresses that child socialization in their peer groups can be revealed by symbolic interaction. Thus, Corsaro (1988: 189) refers to Goffman's (1974) methods, like 'secondary adjustments' for his fieldwork experiences, with an emphasis on children's imitation of adult roles in their peer cultures, however, to transform social norms by means of both collective and individual roles is possible through intersubjectivity. Transforming social norms means changing existing discourses for this study, which I tried to realize, after content analysis of the fieldwork, I selected the parts which are related to gender differences to reanalyse them in terms of discourses underlying the sentences of children, and even mine.

Furthermore, I would like to advert the child-oriented approach I had benefit from: Wall (2010: 3) defines “childism” as “the effort to respond to the experiences of children by transforming understanding and practices for all” which means also self-critique for humanism, to rethink ethical norms in our society. With a “childist” perspective, Damon (1988: 9) addresses children as active participants of their own can be understood by both their socialization and individualization processes. In this study, I tried to observe children whom I studied with in their general group conversations, in their gendered group attitudes and manners, and their reactions to me as a researcher who has kept her positioning in between a ‘teacher’ as they called me, and only a human being with “childist” approach.

Methodology of Research

In order to observe children’s peer cultures and their various peer relations, an ethnographic study was conducted. During 2018-2019 semester, I encountered with around forty students (20 females and 25 males) who are 11-12 years-old, in three different classes of sixth grade in a private secondary school in Istanbul, Turkey. We met together with children every couple of weeks and realized workshops on specific topics respectively. The reasons I chose that school to study are its location, its being private, and its higher academic success in comparison to other private schools. Because I would like to study with children whose parents have higher SES in order to focus on their interaction to technology more, and their differentiations on peer groups without any other variables, such as economic difficulties, ethnicity, or disabilities. Therefore, I encountered with a homogenous group of children to lead my ethnographic fieldwork a case study. Briefly, my research aims were to concentrate on children’s peer cultures, and to observe their gender segregation, and interaction to digital technologies as well.

I used philosophy for children (P4C) which was developed by Lipman (1992) as a critical pedagogy tool to create a way for emancipatory education as a research technique to understand children’s opinions and approaches to the topics we argued with. Besides, I changed and recreated my research plan according to children’s interests, and I adapted the subjects I wanted to discuss, to their own wishes. Although we made focus group interviews by P4C workshops, it became more like discussions ‘with’ children. By this means, phenomenology was used as a sociological research method for the study, like Schütz (2018) points out, since we rebuilt the concepts together with children in our face-to-face encounters. Goffman (1963: 15) also adverts that face-to-face interactions enrich knowledge in a fieldwork, referring to Schütz, it might be a better way to use these methods for childhood studies, to provide them to belong to the community, and simultaneously, for me as a researcher to become a part of their community.

A Case Study in a Private Secondary School in Istanbul

From the first encounter, I have tried to observe children’s relations, and the first thing

took my attention was their friends groups' gender separation. At the beginning of adolescence, even it's quite understandable for children to make groups of girls and boys apart, I realized more differences about their actions at break times. While girls prefer talking to each other and make up plays by acting physically, most of the boys stay in the classroom in front of their tablets to play online games. This difference between them just pushed me to study more on gender differences. Besides their perspectives on gendered worlds, I also tried to conduct our conversations on gender issue. For this paper, I'll mention three of them respectively based on the content analysis, then in discussion part, critical discourse analysis will also be used as a tool to underline the changing worlds of children owing to their gender identity.

Is there gender equality?

New-designed board games on gender are generally based on gender stereotypes in society. Although they include traditional discourses deriving from usual circumstances on gender, to use the way how gender stereotypes have built up, according to games during childhood period and occupations during the rest of our lives, would be useful to reveal our deeper judgements. Therefore, I made up several [1] open-ended short stories to focus on children's opinions about the topic "does gender equality exist in real world?" Despite I did not share our main topic with students, when I distributed them the very-short stories in small papers, a few of them just found 'the problem' by saying loudly "now, we are discussing the gender equality!" 'Gender equality' term belonging to adult world actually, was known and be used by a 11-year-old boys, which is quite related to both wide-spreading educational perspectives, and children's agenda's becoming closer to adults.

The first story is about a male ballet dancer kid, whose parents don't let him to do that dance, since they think it's not convenient for him. There are two options for children to end the story on their own; first one is (choice A) about the character's lying and doing whatever he wants, and second choice (B) is listening to his parents for his life because to lie is always wrong. That ethical conflict made children reason so carefully that reasoning levels of 11-year-old children is also important as an indicator for philosophy for children technique is beyond the development stages of Piaget. According to Piaget (1971: 68), children at 12 age can leave thinking egocentrically, however they are still not able to build up reasonable relations. Furthermore, Kohlberg's analysis (1984) on Heinz dilemma also addresses that at 10-year-old, children tend to obey to law as being at first moral stage, when they get 16, they leave egocentric perspective and have empathy with other humans, declaring some concepts like care, love, and trust. On the other hand, our focus group interview shows children at 11 years-old can also behave properly to fifth and even sixth moral stages, because they give examples about when people don't have to be honest for others' sake on social contract (which points fifth stage), and some of the children defend to be honest any time as a universal value (which points sixth stage as a Kantian perspective of deontological ethics). Although most of them thought the first choice (the character's behaving upon his desire) was the 'right' end for the story, they changed their mind to

create another solution.

G1 [2]: We did not agree with these either, but if we choose one, we think A is better.

B1: He shan't lie. He shall say to his parents, "everybody is free to do what they want. There is no discrimination between girls and boys", if his mother insists to object, he continues what he does.

G2: He doesn't have to lie. So, our common decision is C: a new choice.

Despite I did not use a concept like 'discrimination', children found out it, and they positioned the problem as discrimination. From this perspective, it can be claimed that children can create gender equality, they are all against to 'discrimination', even they don't accept the existence of that concept, whereas, especially boys still find "a boy who dance ballet" strange. When I asked them to adapt this story to a drama, the boys acted kiddingly, one of them also asked me "can you imagine me dancing ballet?" Then boys defend themselves as telling they don't find anything strange about male-gendered ballet dancers, but they are not interested in ballet themselves. The ballet's belonging to an upper-class cultural tendency is another subject to mention, the important point here is while boys were having fun on the topic, only girls said, "men also dance ballet", "there are lots of ballets."

In addition to the common opinion that the character should be decisive on what he desires, there was another C option, such as 'gender transition.' When a girl said, "he should change his sex", a boy replied "yes, he shall take hormones, male hormones." Gender identity is also another important topic about gender education, because self-identity construction is based on traditional gender roles, which is open to criticize. Since children are unaware of the difference between sex and gender, and we always use the word *cinsiyet* which means "sex" during our conversation in Turkish, "gender" is more an academic word which is used neither in everyday speech, nor in education. The child's idea about gender-transition as a solution for a male to dance ballet seems a risky thought to deconstruct traditional gender discourse and recreate a new (genderless) one. As a result of this, gender equality education should be re-built without any existing discourse.

Another argument also occurred about the conflict between character's obeying to his family or being decisive on his passion that he is supposed to live in accordance with his parents' rules owing to both economic and legal reasons. When one asked "why don't they let him go to a ballet school?", another child replied "because, they are discriminatory!" [3]. On the other hand, some of them had to be convinced that the character should listen to his parents for a while, because they would pay for the school, the parents have the power, since they have the money, not the kid.

B2: [he talked in behalf of the character] I will wait until I'm 18, and then I won't listen to even one word of yours.

Then they argued whether becoming 18 means transition to adulthood or not. One of them gave some examples about his older brother's getting 18-year-old and became

able to do whatever he wanted that time. And most of them defined being above 18 as “to leave childhood”. The comparison between children and parents also made them think on having experiences, which I will discuss more specifically at next section. To clarify the gender differences on children’s reaction to adult authority; while boys seemed to accept adults’ knowledge because of having more experiences, girls generally underlined intelligence as non-related to age. [One of the girls used the idiom “Akıl yaşta değil baştadır”, which means “wisdom doesn’t come with age”, can directly be translated as “intelligence is in the head, not in the age”, as well]. In other respects, their common judgment about adults’ authority seems limited to leaving childhood at 18.

B3: He may lie to his parents until 18.

B4: Parents can’t intervene. That time [since 18 years-old] they don’t have to provide our needs. Not legally. They don’t have to. But they can.

G3: His parents do wrong.

G4: He should follow his dreams. His mother can’t decide what his occupation will be. Unless he wants, he may not.

At the end, family authority was turned upside-down by the sentence “life is his life, nobody can intervene. It’s my opinion”. They also seemed to prefer taking their own responsibility both emotionally, and economically in order to decide by their own, rather than becoming strict to their family and staying under their protection.

Second open-ended story was about two siblings who have difficulty to share Barbie toys. The older sister doesn’t want to share ‘her’ Barbies with her brother, because she thinks it’s not proper for him. Here property and siblings-sharing construct the ethical conflicts of the narrative, while the main issue is toys’ being gendered. The choices for the story are to approve the girl and expect the boy to find another toy appropriate for him (A); or addressing the idea that “toys don’t have genders or colours” (B). It seems clear for children to choose option B, but then, they need to create a solution for siblings. On the other hand, even all the children thought option B is the ‘right’ answer, their reactions showed a different tendency: when I distributed them the papers, the boys who had that story wanted to exchange it to another one, which is about Fortnite, a battle video-game, that generally boys are fond of it. Barbie was just like a test paper for them to react according to a gender spectrum, which is full of stereotypes deriving from traditional discourses. When children came to board to tell the story and how they continued, the girls in the group read and talked, as the boys were quite silent.

G5: We decided B.

G6: If his sister doesn’t let him take her toys, he shouldn’t take. Anyway, toys have no colour or gender at all.

G7: If he takes them without permission, I’d get angry with him. But if he asks for permission, I’d share. To share is nice.

G8: Yet, she doesn't have to share. They belong to her. But Barbie is not a toy for girls. Boys, even grown-ups can play with it.

As I thought the ethical issue is about property and sharing, they underlined the sister "doesn't have to share her belongings" but she "should share". Because only the girls continued to speak, I provoked the boys by pointing one of them as a Barbie-player. He started to shout like "Noooo", then everybody laughed at him. When we turned back to our debate, one of the girls hold the floor again:

G9: If it was the opposite, if boys played with Barbie dolls, and girls played with "boys' toys", it would be strange too. There is discrimination. I think, there would be again.

G8: I think so. There would be girls-boys discrimination yet. I think they make Barbies like girls, I mean, they look like girls, that's why girls play with.

Then we talked about Action Man, and other "boys' dolls". They had a definition as "boys' and girls' toys", however they didn't accept there is any difference between toys for girls and boys. They thought the differences were derived from the people who had invented those toys. And one said that all those distinctions still exist because of "thoughts from past", such as "girls stay home and cook etc".

B5: I think, if the first one who plays [with Barbie] were a boy, boys would play [with Barbie]. The first must be a girl, that's why girls play.

B6: If we dress up Barbies with men's clothes, and make them fight to each other, then they become toys for boys.

In addition to boys' relation to battle games comparing to girls' softer dolls, boys also addressed their different attitudes:

B7: Girls and boys see everything differently. You cannot see any boys like, "ooh, my clothes!", but girls gussy up.

G9: Girls and boys are different from each other for sure. Yet, it's more related to one's personality.

Finally, when we were back to our main topic, children tend to create another option one more time. They made a compromise that "any person can play with whatever they desire" without any distinction deriving from age or sexuality. It's quite remarkable that even they thought there was no discrimination, or differences between girls and boys, as long as we continued to reason, the hidden opinions behind their words came to light, just as one child's declaring "thoughts from past", it's clear the children were under the pressure of traditional discourse on gender differences.

The last story was about Fortnite. When boys didn't want to take place in ballet or Barbie stories, now they were quite eager to read the story beginning on Fortnite. There is a girl character in the story who is exactly keen on battle games, and her brother complains about her playing Fornite all the time, and her insisting on being

better than him at this play, as well. So, the first option (A) for the following part is to admit the brother's feelings and to address the idea that "battle games are produced for boys", the other option (B) is girls' interest in such plays also makes sense, and the sister in the story might even be better than the boy actually. The sentence of "battle games are for boys" itself made the boys in the classroom object to that judgment, one said "No, teacher, there is a channel for girls, and they play great!" then he shared the name of the channel with his friends, they agreed the girls there were the best players.

Although all of the children admitted that girls would be better than boys at battle games, all girls chose the second option, while the boys were a bit suspicious about which girls could play really well. After that, when a girl shared her opinion as "I though B is right from the beginning", one of the boys pointed her and said, "because you have ever played Fortnite during your life!" It sounded like a blame, and the girl also needed to defend herself as a battle-game-player, saying "I played. And I also have so many girl friends who plays battle games". Playing battle games seems 'cool' for children as we understand, there might be two different reasons: One is adults' bias for that kind of games, and even they might ban their kids from playing, which made battle games more attractive in kids' point of views. In addition to rejecting adult authority is cool, the second reason might be about accepting an authority rather than any rejection, that boys' tendencies have become desirable ones, even they might settle up new norms for children's cultural habits. In order to focus on children's thoughts about these differentiations, the discourse behind the interviews we had, is needed to be revealed:

B8: The games for girls and the games for boys are always different. Fathers and mothers are also different. Just think, if there are Barbie dolls or something like that, B option also makes sense, you see. There are female characters then, some dances for girls...

It's clear that the boy who made those sentences thought that girls and boys had natural differences. Even girls could play some battle games, there should be other things which are more related to girls, not only plays, but also dances are convenient for girls, according to that kid. After his words, a girl mentioned family effects: "everything is actually related to your family. However, they lead you..." Then they started to talk about their families' reactions on gender differences.

B9: Not only family. You can also learn so much things from your friends.

B10: You may learn how to be discriminatory, for example.

G10: Except family, girls are given pink, bloomy things which butterflies on, and boys are given blue coloured things. Then one likes something at first, s/he finds it closer.

G11: I think we should change the situation. Because everybody can enjoy with everything. For example, I give up playing boy-games, but I still play with my cousin sometimes. And teacher, I think there is another point... as if girls do the

things the boys usually do, while boys can't do what girls are supposed to do.

That difference she underlined was important to indicate the pressure on men in society, they were asked to make norms actually, although they didn't want to. Therefore, it can be claimed that children are exactly aware of the situations of men and women in society, however they tend to deny their having differences in their every-day lives, self-awareness seems insufficient. Here the norm is playing battle games, which boys have created, and girls try to adapt themselves to build a status in that world – it's also their strategy to have a position in digital world, as well. Children tend to build up their identities upon the things they'd like to do, and gender identity as a part of the whole subjectivity, girls might behave like boys to become cooler / more charismatic, whereas boys were just afraid of being seen like girls, not only physically, but also emotionally. In the end, we can address that the differences between girls and boys during childhood is just similar the gender differences in adulthood; while men need to maintain their positions in society, women need to behave like men, even they should force themselves to transform into 'man-like' to achieve better positions for both their professional careers and everyday lives.

Gender roles in digital world

In another focus group interview of us, we discussed gender roles deriving from occupations through knowledge we gained from internet. As a starter for our P4C conversation, I showed the children the translations of Google Translate, such as: she is a nurse, he is a doctor. Turkish is a gender-neutral language that we don't have to indicate the sexualities of subjects, that's why we use same pronoun for 'He / She / It' as 'O', in translation they get gendered as traditional judgements in between gender and occupations.

B1: Why doesn't it say "it" [rather than he or she]?

G1: Cause it is discriminatory.

B2: The artificial intelligence?

G2: The internet looks at the average, if men are 1% higher than women for it, it is written "he".

G3: If I were it, I would indicate as her/his with slash (/) [4].

B3: It has the algorithm actually for one sentence, but when you write more than one, it becomes confused.

The statements related to technology, such as "artificial intelligence", "algorithm" belongs to the boys, whereas the girls are more interested in real world issues on gender-based facts. For instance, one of them mentioned "In Germany or some other countries, women drive buses", and another girl continued to it "but we are surprised here when we see a taxi driver who is a woman", then the third girl added "I claim that

there are ten women taxi drivers at most in Turkey!” And the girls are right about their observations, even the number is not ten for sure, the average of women drivers is really low in Turkey, comparing to any European countries. Furthermore, that observation led the children to talk about ‘woman’ as an adjective: because ‘women drivers’ are rare in Turkey, that statement has suddenly transformed into a specific pattern.

G4: I will say something that takes my attention: they say football player, for example, but they say, “woman football player, woman engineer”, as if the normal must be man.

G5: Then, let them say “man football player” for male ones.

B4: [objected to the girls’ statements] I never heard something like that, they aren’t named as “woman...”.

G4: [got angry with the boy] Oh teacher, they never heard!

Then, only the girls talked about gender differences on occupations, with an increasing temper:

G6: They need to declare woman; I think it’s not necessary.

G5: If there is no occupation like “woman driver”.

G7: They made a discrimination as if women are abnormal.

G8: They code Google Translate according to men.

G9: Everywhere, you can see gender discrimination, for example in sports, teams are separated by for women and for men.

G10: Perhaps, artificial intelligence imitates the society, everybody uploads something to the internet, if there are more women cook, then it becomes...

From that moment, our debate turned back to the main issue, which is more related to technological devices, however, it was quite clear that the topics children tend to argue changed upon their genders. Even they claimed there is (or shouldn’t be) any differences at all, their reactions were exactly different from each other. Another example can be given as girls’ interest on the distinctive sentences “she is married – he is single”, one of them expressed her opinion as “they show men for being single in movies, but married ones are women”, even boys objected that “the number of married women has to be equal to men” girls continued to argue by adverting the differences between spaces: “for example, men wander around with their friends outside, do whatever they want, while women work at home”. It was just like a radical feminist argument of the separation of private and public spaces through genders.

G11: [objected to the boy who mentioned about “number equality”] It’s not about numbers. They think a woman will marry, cook, do this and that, whereas men just stay as his single position. Women may also quit their jobs when they

get married, they work when they are single, but then, they will make babies...

B5: How can I tell? As if... especially in Turkey, as if women have to get married...

B6: But there is another discrimination among families, for example, fathers behave daughters... well... they get angry with sons more.

B5: Especially about the money issues. When boys are 18, they are supposed to leave home, but they pay for girls' school.

In Turkey, when parents, especially father of the household passed away, daughters can have the salary until they get married, while sons can have it until they get 18, actually. Even the boy who said the words above didn't know the situation, he was right about the observation he had in a way. Then, boys began to talk on their gendered positions on their parents' minds. They thought girls had more freedom than themselves, because they weren't supposed to go somewhere the fathers wanted.

B4: Girls are given to choose to go or stay somewhere. But boys are under pressure, fathers say "be a man".

It's actually girls' not being taken seriously about their actions, while boys are wanted to become subjects. However, children interpreted girls' being ignored positions as 'freedom.' When they compared their parents' status, their awareness of the inequality between women and men on occupations, and salaries as well came to light. Girls complained about women's having less salary than men if they both work for same jobs for same durations. They defined such circumstances as "sexist, discriminatory, unequal".

Gender differences in power relations

This section is about adult-children distinction, with this basic question "who has a voice in the world / who should have a voice in the world? Children or adults?" It was quite sure that children tend to declare whether they had a voice by their own, or not, the ones who should have a voice are children rather than adults, because they have the future. However, different opinions occurred during the focus group interview that I analysed the findings on gender basis.

B1: Adults have a voice; they have more experiences and they know what to do.

B2: They made rules, but if they are wrong, we'll change them in the future.

G1: I think children can imagine better, since their imagination is wider.

While the boys seem to accept adult authority because of their experiences, girls tend to deny it, addressing their powerful sides, such as imagination, self-confidence, "ways of thinking". Children have better ways of thinking as they said, whereas boys underlined their positions through adults' perspectives again, by creating a distinction between "baby and child". When one said, "adults see us as babies", another boy replied as "they see us as the things that cannot think". Moreover, both girls and boys

began to give examples from their everyday lives in order to emphasize how they are ignored by adults in public spaces, like restaurants, shops, even public transport.

B3: I will tell you something about “they see us as babies”, every time we go to a restaurant, my father wants me to order something, he told me “you’re grown enough”, but when I say something, the man [waiter] asks someone else.

B4: Workers in the places go to adults when we ask for something, because the ones who will pay the money are adults.

Therefore, we can claim even children seem as individuals for their parents, they are ignored all the time in public spaces by adults as if they are ‘babies’ which means ones who are not able to think according to them. That competency matter is important to emphasize the power relations between children and adults, because children are meant to be defined as their being “incompetent” to say, act, have a voice, etc. In other aspects, children related this issue to ‘children’s rights’ by pointing out “they don’t regard our rights, children cannot say ‘I have right to word.’” During our discussion on children-adult distinction deriving from ‘competency’, girls were more willing to speak, and they usually underlined that children should speak for their own. For boys, the asymmetric relation seemed more remarkable, because they tend to determine their advantages in face of adults, such as they had “the experience of a technological device”.

B5: Grown-ups, for example... there was no internet in the past. So, they don’t know it.

B6: Yes, they don’t have experience on technological things.

B7: Even they live longer than us, they don’t have the experience of a new produced smart phone, then.

Gender differences were also clear about children’s tendencies to technology. Although girls seemed to defend themselves more than boys against adult authority, they didn’t show interest about their advantages on technology. They talked about “governing” of adults mostly, and would like to share power, for “small decisions” at least. They needed to be taken their opinions about family issues for a beginning. One of the girls also said, “it is [having children’s opinions] necessary to provide confidence for them”, another added “they should be asked, I agree, if they [children] don’t decide for themselves, they never learn how to take decisions”.

While girls were so certain about their having right decisions, boys accepted they might be wrong, because children might behave irrationally. When I asked them, who decide what is rational, the boys reminded adults’ knowledge and experiences. They thought adults had lessons from their mistakes, and they could decide more reasonable according to their past. I provoked them their perspective was “adultist”, then they made compromise that adults may also be unreasonable, sometimes. One of the boys said at the end: “they must force us so much that they even made me believe [that they are always reasonable]”.

DISCUSSION

Children are protected by adults and their needs are provided by them, adults are the ones who have authorship and right to govern according to traditional discourse, which recreates the hierarchy between two different polarizations. In order to change that hierarchical dichotomy to an emancipatory relationship, Freire's (2014) suggestion on developing critical consciousness might create an alternative for critical education possibilities. Thus, Lipman's P4C method as a pedagogical tool can also be transformed into an equal communication way with children in order to empower them to express themselves. The important point is to empower children is related to one side's having the power already, in her writing on a children's movie, Odrowaz-Coates (2016: 72) underlines children's salvation is only possible by "self-empowerment". Actually the text (2016: 69) refers to the plot of an animation for children [Box-trolls], which we may see a cultural product "for" children, on the other hand, those kinds of creative products have a serious potential to become a "material to enhance critical thinking" through children's interpretations. On that account, I made up little scenarios to develop with children in order to motivate them to share their ideas. Instead of empowerment discourse, I attempted to create a "childist" one.

This case study put forward children's levels of self-awareness, their familiarity with the agenda of the world issues, and some concepts belong to the adults' milieu as well, and their tendencies to imitate existing social roles eligibly to Corsaro's peer culture approach. According to the results, it is seen that all the concepts such as, "gender equality", "discrimination", honesty as a "universal value", "sexist", "discriminatory" are familiar for children. In addition to their daily conversations with these concepts, they also use "sexist, racist, discriminatory" words as insults. In other parts of our fieldwork, most of the children expressed their discomfort feelings about government or people's "exclusivist" behaviours to the "others". On the one hand, they constitute their subjectivity by identifying "the other", on the other hand, they don't have self-awareness enough to define their gendered divisions in their daily lives. They usually insist on that although there is gender discrimination in social life, they don't have such experiences. When they try to open their own experiences, they realize boys and girls are different in their everyday lives, too, whereas, they claim that the situation is unique: they may not have better relationships with "the others" having opposite sex, it is about their personalities, not about their sexualities.

To get to the main topic, the results show us several differences between girls and boys; for instance, while the girls are close to build face to face relationships and create plays upon physical acting and facial expressions, the boys' preferences are more related to digital world. Furthermore, in our conversations on gender issue, the girls are more related to real world circumstances comparing to the boys. Both girls and boys have same opinions about internet's reflecting the existing biases of the real society: some of them expressed that situation through conservative discourses of society. They are also aware of the differences between countries, most of the children needed to advert "especially in Turkey", or different nations' specific "discriminatory behaviours". Children's awareness of agenda is derived from achieving knowledge

through internet rapidly and easily, which is their basic advantage against older generations. Korczak (2017: 27) pointed out that “we say that they are future people, future workers, future citizens” decades ago, and nowadays children are exactly aware of their becoming future citizens, thus, their reactions to adult authority is another important topic to debate on in the frame of this case study.

For this study, there are also different understandings of children revealed upon their genders against authority; the boys seem more advocating authorship, while the girls have desire to defend themselves. The main reason of that specific segregation might be about their “future” identities, the results already show that all the children accept becoming 18 means “leaving childhood” and becoming free to what they really want to do. Another aspect is also the boys’ interpretations on freedom as “doing whatever you want”, while girls tend to relate the concept of freedom to other concepts, like empathy, responsibility, taking care of others, etc. Within those distinctive interpretations, it can be claimed that boys are only interested in becoming adults, thus, adult authority doesn’t seem as a real problem for them, they already know childhood period they have been experiencing is temporal. On the other hand, girls might be aware of power relations more in comparison to the boys, because they already interpret many existing issues in real world about gender discrimination. In addition to self-awareness they have, from their potential women-positions, they also comment on the boys’ feeling pressured to become ‘a man’ in a society where men should be authors and have power to govern; while the boys rarely interpret on girls’ and women’s positioning in everyday life.

Furthermore, power relations among genders effect family relations, as children addressed father-son relationship differently than relationships building with daughters. Socialization of boys seem more necessary than girls according to families within conservative discourse. Except boys’ commentaries about girls’ becoming free from those obligatory social events, there are many similar misunderstandings on girls’ positioning in social life. For instance, boys’ relation to technological devices is seen as a problem for parents and teachers as well, thus, girls reach to a privileged position in the eyes of adults. However, girls’ distance to digital technology is another side of gender inequality, just like the children emphasized that artificial intelligence imitates people, and digital world is like a reflection of our existing society; thus, if girls are separated from digital technologies, it would create a new kind of gender discrimination. Besides, gender positioning in digital world means construction of future power relations. The differences between public and private spaces as a previous gender segregation, related to women and men positioning within society and personal lives, which the girls pointed out, the differences between real and virtual spaces may lead the children to potential inequalities.

Lastly, I would like to point out another observation I have, which is more related to educational basis: children tried to choose the “right” option for the story-endings, instead of developing them in the beginning, that’s why I adverted ‘right’ words in quotation marks. As long as they reasoned on the plot, and investigated the character’s choices to continue the story, they began to create new –third- choices. That shows children have powerful imaginaries and reasoning capacities, as they have already

declared, however the existing educational system only have led them to 'choose/find' the 'right' answer/solution, which kills their creativity, and desire to search for different solutions. In this respect, critical pedagogy seems necessary to rethink about by children's experiences, such as McLaren (2011: 355) addresses that pedagogy should be based on childhood experiences. Vucic (2017: 171) also underlines deconstruction of power relations is only possible through a radical approach like Korczak's, which is "centred on the agency of each person to individually resist in the smallest of ways, even against themselves". To interpret that statement for gender equality education, according to families' traditional point of views I adverted above, gender equality can only be built by a possible solidarity between children and adults. It is clear that both parents at home, and teachers at school from older generations who are filled with prejudices on gender roles, that's why to recreate new perspectives on gender requires a "childist" approach, which should be purged from stereotypes.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this case study with children on gender differentiations and adult authority revealed their various perspectives on several topics, such as adult-children relations, women-men positioning in society, differences between girls and boys, and how digital space reflects people's usual behaviours. According to the main topic, which focuses on differences between boys and girls, the research's findings can be summarized within six different theme, which are more or less related to each other: children's preferences for communication and plays; their reactions to adult authority; potential awareness on 'the other'; self-awareness they already have; their attitudes on real world and/or digital world and technologies; their willingness to recreate existing social roles, to "change situation".

The limitation of the study is that the group of children I encountered with is a homogenous group, because it is an ethnographic fieldwork, research findings are only valid for that small group interactions, and their peer relations. On the other hand, following studies could be conducted on both basis, children's imitations of gender roles (and reconstructing them), and changing power relations upon to asymmetric knowledge relations as well. Furthermore, comparative case studies would be also beneficial to reveal different childhood experiences among various ethnic communities, nations, or social classes.

This study is an attempt to focus on childhood matter with children themselves, thus following studies need to be realized based on different children's needs, like Engel (2013: 123) reminds Korczak's writing on children's right as "the child's right to the present and the right of the child to be what he is". They are here around all over the world, to communicate, to understand, and act together through their perspectives in order to deconstruct stereotypes to rebuild the world as one of the children said "there is no discrimination between(...)" not only girls and boys, among any of children, who are people of today.

NOTES

[1]. Actually, there were four different stories, two of them were about girls, on plays & occupations, two of them were about boys, on plays & occupations; whereas we couldn't use one of them, which was related to a girl's occupation choice, because it was understood in another aspect by children according to the occupational prestige.

[2]. I separated the speakers according to their sex, by naming them as Girl1- Girl-2 & Boy-1, Boy-2 respectively. It is actually objectionable to separate children upon their sex, because it may re-produce the settled gender distinctions pointing their subjectivity according to gender issues. However, my purpose is to observe what they experience about this problem and how they interpret that. In order to investigate where the settled distinctions have been arising from, possible "unspeakable" things are also needed to be revealed in following studies through feminist epistemology.

[3]. Here, it should be addressed that "discriminatory/discrimination" is the most equalivalent word for "ayırımı/ayırmıcılık" which seems to belong adults' world mostly (furthermore, children's using this word as an invective is a remarkable finding). However, it's not very clear to point out the difference between "marginalize(d)" and "exclusive(d)", since we use same word, "dışla(n)mak" for both, in Turkish. If we focus on the words' roots, "ex" and "dış" have similar meanings, that's why I'll prefer to translate all these words as "exclusive", and the meanings would be shaped according to the context.

[4]. Merriam-Webster dictionary (2019) has made the update about "they" as a singular "gender-neutral" pronoun in September 2019, after we had the discussion with the children. It may be concerned that if we have a discussion like from now, children can mention about "they" pronoun instead of suggesting to put slash (/). That's why that part of the study might be repeated with a group of children.

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